

Testimony of MSgt Brian Naylor

Appropriations Committee

Hearing date: February 27, 2015

My name is MSgt Brian Naylor, USAF retired and I live in Waterbury, CT. I am here today to urge the Committee to restore full state funding for Connecticut's Independent Living Centers. These centers daily serve a vital role in assisting citizens with disabilities, allowing them to choose how and where they live, and meeting their needs with one on one personal care.

Independence Northwest, a Center for Independent Living (CIL) in Northwest, CT, has employed me since September of 2013. I work as a Veterans and Independent Living Advocate for people with disabilities.

My testimony starts in June 2012 before my last deployment to Afghanistan when the prior Independence Northwest Veterans Advocate helped me submit a disability claim for my injuries on previous deployments. The VA disability process is very cumbersome and time consuming but Independence Northwest's Veterans Advocate handled my claim promptly and with great concern. Upon my return home in 2013 I was granted my disability.

Then in August of 2013, the veterans advocate decided he was

retiring and ask me if I was interested in continuing his work at Independence Northwest. It has been my pleasure and with great personal reward to work with disabled veterans who in many instances have been eligible for benefits for many, many years but the process was too confusing and cumbersome for them to handle on their own.

In a little over a year as a Veterans Advocate, I have assisted more than 40 elder veterans who have needed help with things as simple as obtaining discharge papers for tax purposes to seeing them get thousands of dollars a month for aid and attendance. Since many of these veterans are well under the 110% poverty level I've found they also qualify for other state programs such as the Medicare Savings Program, which can reimburse \$1250 a year back to these individuals. Most also are eligible for SNAP food assistance and fuel assistance, which can easily provide another \$1200 plus for these Veterans.

There would be a huge void without the Centers for Independent Living to provide a helping hand, comfort and confidence to these disabled veterans and to persons with disabilities who otherwise would have no one to turn too.

Please support the restoration of funding to the Centers For Independent Living in full. This is an investment that is paying off on the most basic of human needs, showing Veterans and Persons

with Disabilities they matter, and we fully support them.

V/r

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